

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 1288

96TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES HIGDON (Sponsor), DAVIS, GATSCHENBERGER,
FUNDERBURK, McGHEE, KLIPPENSTEIN AND FITZWATER (Co-sponsors).

4146L.011

D. ADAM CRUMBLISS, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 452.340, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to child support.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 452.340, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 452.340, to read as follows:

452.340. 1. In a proceeding for dissolution of marriage, legal separation or child support, the court may order either or both parents owing a duty of support to a child of the marriage to pay an amount reasonable or necessary for the support of the child, including an award retroactive to the date of filing the petition, without regard to marital misconduct, after considering all relevant factors including:

- (1) The financial needs and resources of the child;
- (2) The financial resources and needs of the parents;
- (3) The standard of living the child would have enjoyed had the marriage not been dissolved;
- (4) The physical and emotional condition of the child, and the child's educational needs;
- (5) The child's physical and legal custody arrangements, including the amount of time the child spends with each parent and the reasonable expenses associated with the custody or visitation arrangements; and
- (6) The reasonable work-related child care expenses of each parent.

2. The obligation of the parent ordered to make support payments shall abate, in whole or in part, for such periods of time in excess of thirty consecutive days that the other parent has

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

17 voluntarily relinquished physical custody of a child to the parent ordered to pay child support,
18 notwithstanding any periods of visitation or temporary physical and legal or physical or legal
19 custody pursuant to a judgment of dissolution or legal separation or any modification thereof.
20 In a IV-D case, the family support division may determine the amount of the abatement pursuant
21 to this subsection for any child support order and shall record the amount of abatement in the
22 automated child support system record established pursuant to chapter 454. If the case is not a
23 IV-D case and upon court order, the circuit clerk shall record the amount of abatement in the
24 automated child support system record established in chapter 454.

25 3. Unless the circumstances of the child manifestly dictate otherwise and the court
26 specifically so provides, the obligation of a parent to make child support payments shall
27 terminate when the child:

28 (1) Dies;

29 (2) Marries;

30 (3) Enters active duty in the military;

31 (4) Becomes self-supporting, provided that the custodial parent has relinquished the child
32 from parental control by express or implied consent;

33 (5) Reaches age eighteen, unless the provisions of subsection 4 or 5 of this section apply;
34 or

35 (6) Reaches age twenty-one, unless the provisions of the child support order specifically
36 extend the parental support order past the child's twenty-first birthday for reasons provided by
37 subsection 4 of this section.

38 4. If the child is physically or mentally incapacitated from supporting himself and
39 insolvent and unmarried, the court may extend the parental support obligation past the child's
40 eighteenth birthday.

41 5. (1) If when a child reaches age eighteen, the child is enrolled in and attending a
42 secondary school program of instruction, the parental support obligation shall continue, if the
43 child continues to attend and progresses toward completion of said program, until the child
44 completes such program or reaches age twenty-one, whichever first occurs. If the child is
45 enrolled in an institution of vocational or higher education not later than October first following
46 graduation from a secondary school or completion of a graduation equivalence degree program
47 and so long as the child enrolls for and completes at least twelve hours of credit each semester,
48 not including the summer semester, at an institution of vocational or higher education and
49 achieves grades sufficient to reenroll at such institution, the parental support obligation shall
50 continue until the child completes his or her education, or until the child reaches the age of
51 twenty-one, whichever first occurs.

52 (2) To remain eligible for such continued parental support, at the beginning of each
53 semester the child shall submit to each parent a transcript or similar official document provided
54 by the institution of vocational or higher education which includes the courses the child is
55 enrolled in and has completed for each term, the grades and credits received for each such
56 course, and an official document from the institution listing the courses which the child is
57 enrolled in for the upcoming term and the number of credits for each such course.

58 (3) When enrolled in at least twelve credit hours, if the child receives failing grades in
59 half or more of his or her courseload in any one semester, payment of child support may be
60 terminated and shall not be eligible for reinstatement. Upon request for notification of the child's
61 grades by the noncustodial parent, the child shall produce the required documents to the
62 noncustodial parent within thirty days of receipt of grades from the education institution. If the
63 child fails to produce the required documents, payment of child support may terminate without
64 the accrual of any child support arrearage and shall not be eligible for reinstatement.

65 (4) If the circumstances of the child manifestly dictate, the court may waive the October
66 first deadline for enrollment required by this subsection.

67 (5) If the child is enrolled in such an institution, the child or parent obligated to pay
68 support may petition the court to amend the order to direct the obligated parent to make the
69 payments directly to the child.

70 (6) As used in this section, an "institution of vocational education" means any
71 postsecondary training or schooling for which the student is assessed a fee and attends classes
72 regularly. "Higher education" means any community college, college, or university at which the
73 child attends classes regularly.

74 (7) A child who has been diagnosed with a developmental disability, as defined in
75 section 630.005, or whose physical disability or diagnosed health problem limits the child's
76 ability to carry the number of credit hours prescribed in this subsection, shall remain eligible for
77 child support so long as such child is enrolled in and attending an institution of vocational or
78 higher education, and the child continues to meet the other requirements of this subsection.

79 (8) A child who is employed at least fifteen hours per week during the semester may take
80 as few as nine credit hours per semester and remain eligible for child support so long as all other
81 requirements of this subsection are complied with.

82

83 **All child support orders shall include language detailing the specific rights and obligations**
84 **of the obligor parent or parents and the child as set forth in this subsection. The Missouri**
85 **Supreme Court shall by rule determine the specific language required to be included in all**
86 **child support orders under this subsection.**

87 6. The court shall consider ordering a parent to waive the right to claim the tax
88 dependency exemption for a child enrolled in an institution of vocational or higher education in
89 favor of the other parent if the application of state and federal tax laws and eligibility for
90 financial aid will make an award of the exemption to the other parent appropriate.

91 7. The general assembly finds and declares that it is the public policy of this state that
92 frequent, continuing and meaningful contact with both parents after the parents have separated
93 or dissolved their marriage is in the best interest of the child except for cases where the court
94 specifically finds that such contact is not in the best interest of the child. In order to effectuate
95 this public policy, a court with jurisdiction shall enforce visitation, custody and child support
96 orders in the same manner. A court with jurisdiction may abate, in whole or in part, any past or
97 future obligation of support and may transfer the physical and legal or physical or legal custody
98 of one or more children if it finds that a parent has, without good cause, failed to provide
99 visitation or physical and legal or physical or legal custody to the other parent pursuant to the
100 terms of a judgment of dissolution, legal separation or modifications thereof. The court shall
101 also award, if requested and for good cause shown, reasonable expenses, attorney's fees and court
102 costs incurred by the prevailing party.

103 8. The Missouri supreme court shall have in effect a rule establishing guidelines by
104 which any award of child support shall be made in any judicial or administrative proceeding.
105 Said guidelines shall contain specific, descriptive and numeric criteria which will result in a
106 computation of the support obligation. The guidelines shall address how the amount of child
107 support shall be calculated when an award of joint physical custody results in the child or
108 children spending equal or substantially equal time with both parents and the directions and
109 comments and any tabular representations of the directions and comments for completion of the
110 child support guidelines and a subsequent form developed to reflect the guidelines shall reflect
111 the ability to obtain up to a fifty percent adjustment or credit below the basic child support
112 amount for joint physical custody or visitation as described in subsection 11 of this section. The
113 Missouri supreme court shall publish child support guidelines and specifically list and explain
114 the relevant factors and assumptions that were used to calculate the child support guidelines.
115 Any rule made pursuant to this subsection shall be reviewed by the promulgating body not less
116 than once every four years to ensure that its application results in the determination of
117 appropriate child support award amounts.

118 9. There shall be a rebuttable presumption, in any judicial or administrative proceeding
119 for the award of child support, that the amount of the award which would result from the
120 application of the guidelines established pursuant to subsection 8 of this section is the correct
121 amount of child support to be awarded. A written finding or specific finding on the record in a
122 judicial or administrative proceeding that the application of the guidelines would be unjust or

123 inappropriate in a particular case, after considering all relevant factors, including the factors set
124 out in subsection 1 of this section, is required if requested by a party and shall be sufficient to
125 rebut the presumption in the case. The written finding or specific finding on the record shall
126 detail the specific relevant factors that required a deviation from the application of the guidelines.

127 10. Pursuant to this or any other chapter, when a court determines the amount owed by
128 a parent for support provided to a child by another person, other than a parent, prior to the date
129 of filing of a petition requesting support, or when the director of the family support division
130 establishes the amount of state debt due pursuant to subdivision (2) of subsection 1 of section
131 454.465, the court or director shall use the guidelines established pursuant to subsection 8 of this
132 section. The amount of child support resulting from the application of the guidelines shall be
133 applied retroactively for a period prior to the establishment of a support order and the length of
134 the period of retroactivity shall be left to the discretion of the court or director. There shall be
135 a rebuttable presumption that the amount resulting from application of the guidelines under
136 subsection 8 of this section constitutes the amount owed by the parent for the period prior to the
137 date of the filing of the petition for support or the period for which state debt is being established.
138 In applying the guidelines to determine a retroactive support amount, when information as to
139 average monthly income is available, the court or director may use the average monthly income
140 of the noncustodial parent, as averaged over the period of retroactivity, in determining the
141 amount of presumed child support owed for the period of retroactivity. The court or director may
142 enter a different amount in a particular case upon finding, after consideration of all relevant
143 factors, including the factors set out in subsection 1 of this section, that there is sufficient cause
144 to rebut the presumed amount.

145 11. The court may award child support in an amount that provides up to a fifty percent
146 adjustment below the basic child support amount authorized by the child support guidelines
147 described under subsection 8 of this section for custody awards of joint physical custody where
148 the child or children spend equal or substantially equal time with both parents.

149 12. The obligation of a parent to make child support payments may be terminated as
150 follows:

151 (1) Provided that the state case registry or child support order contains the child's date
152 of birth, the obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative
153 process when the child reaches age twenty-one if the child support order does not specifically
154 require payment of child support beyond age twenty-one for reasons provided by subsection 4
155 of this section;

156 (2) The obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative
157 process when the parent receiving child support furnishes a sworn statement or affidavit
158 notifying the obligor parent of the child's emancipation in accordance with the requirements of

159 subsection 4 of section 452.370, and a copy of such sworn statement or affidavit is filed with the
160 court which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support
161 division for an order entered under section 454.470;

162 (3) The obligation shall be deemed terminated without further judicial or administrative
163 process when the parent paying child support files a sworn statement or affidavit with the court
164 which entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division
165 for an order entered under section 454.470, stating that the child is emancipated and reciting the
166 factual basis for such statement; which statement or affidavit is served by the court or division,
167 as applicable, on the child support obligee; and which is either acknowledged and affirmed by
168 the child support obligee in writing, or which is not responded to in writing within thirty days
169 of receipt by the child support obligee;

170 (4) The obligation shall be terminated as provided by this subdivision by the court which
171 entered the order establishing the child support obligation, or the family support division for an
172 order entered under section 454.470, when the parent paying child support files a sworn
173 statement or affidavit with the court which entered the order establishing the child support
174 obligation, or the family support division, as applicable, stating that the child is emancipated and
175 reciting the factual basis for such statement; and which statement or affidavit is served by the
176 court or division, as applicable, on the child support obligee. If the obligee denies the statement
177 or affidavit, the court or division shall thereupon treat the sworn statement or affidavit as a
178 request for hearing and shall proceed to hear and adjudicate such request for hearing as provided
179 by law; provided that the court may require the payment of a deposit as security for court costs
180 and any accrued court costs, as provided by law, in relation to such request for hearing. When
181 the division receives a request for hearing, the hearing shall be held in the manner provided by
182 section 454.475.

183 13. The court may enter a judgment terminating child support pursuant to subdivisions
184 (1) to (3) of subsection 12 of this section without necessity of a court appearance by either party.
185 The clerk of the court shall mail a copy of a judgment terminating child support entered pursuant
186 to subsection 12 of this section on both the obligor and obligee parents. The supreme court may
187 promulgate uniform forms for sworn statements and affidavits to terminate orders of child
188 support obligations for use pursuant to subsection 12 of this section and subsection 4 of section
189 452.370.

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